

## **TAPPING THE POWER OF SOCIAL NETWORK IN DAIRY INDUSTRY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The dairy sector plays an important role in the country's socio-economic development, and constitutes an important segment of the rural economy in India. Dairy industry provides livelihood to millions of homes in villages, ensuring supply of quality milk and milk products to people in both urban and rural areas. With a view to keeping pace with the country's increasing demand for milk and milk products, the industry has been growing rapidly.

India is world's largest milk producing country with 133.79 million tonnes of milk production in 2013 (Indian dairymen, August 2013). India contributes about 15 % to the total milk production of the world (NDRI vision document 2030). The Indian milk production is growing at the rate of 4.5 % which is higher than growth rate of milk production in the world. Although India is largest milk producing country in the world but at the same time India also has largest cattle population. According to animal husbandry statistics 2011-12, India's livestock sector is one of the largest in the world. It has 56.7 % of world's buffaloes and 12.5 % cattle. Of the total milk produced in India, about 54 % is produced by Buffaloes, 24 % by crossbred and 22 % by indigenous cattle (Amrita Patel 2013)

**KEYWORDS:** Tapping the Power, Social Network, Dairy Industry, Milk Production, Livestock Sector

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The Structure of Indian Dairy Industry**

India has unique pattern of production, processing and marketing/consumption totally different from other large milk producing countries of the world. With regard to production, Indian dairy industry is predominated by small holder milk producer who rears one or two milch animals. Some 70 million rural households are engaged in milk production, with a very high proportion being the small and marginal farmers and the landless. Whereas in other large milk producing countries, big dairy farms of average herd size of 250-300 milch animals predominate. Thus in India milk is produced by masses scattered throughout India whereas in other large milk producing country it is produced on mass scale concentrated at few places.

With regard to processing and marketing, Indian dairy industry can be divided into organized/formal and unorganized/informal sector. The organized sector handles 30 percent and unorganized sector handles 70 percent of total milk production. (Indian dairymen, August 2013). The organized sector mainly consist of cooperative dairies, government, private and multinational dairy plants of different capacities ranging from less than 1 lack litre per day capacity to more than 25 lakh litre per day capacity. Among organized sector, the share of cooperatives is 60 %. The cooperatives are functioning on three tier 'Anand Pattern' structure consisting of village level cooperative society, district level union and

state level milk marketing federation. The unorganized sector comprise of local traders/halwais who engage themselves in sale of liquid milk and traditional Indian sweets. Of the total milk produced approximately 48 % is retained by household for domestic consumption/retained in production area itself. Remaining 52 % is sold as marketable surplus (J. V. Parekh, 2012)

At the same time social media is the leading revolution in IT sector. Social media can be defined as internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It is the blending of technology and social interaction that creates value in these types of media. It offers us new ways to stay informed and it can simplify information overload. It can fundamentally change agricultural areas if we use it.

Traditionally, agricultural information exchange has been dominated by industrial media such as newspapers, television, and magazines. In recent years, however, technology awareness and computer literacy are increasing across all demographics and various forms of social media are being used more and more by people looking for news, education and other information related to agriculture, dairy and allied fields.

There is no question that social media has changed our world. From the ability to talk to people of like mind from anywhere in the world to the ability to learn the latest news instantly, it has changed both personnel and professional life of human beings dramatically. Social media is all about people. It is a way to build relationships, share information, and connect with diverse audience of people you may never meet in real life. Using social media one can build a strong local voice is key for the dairy industry. Connect with other dairy farmers, processors and industry members online through social media or set up your own social media presence.

So, interacting on social media, whether it is Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Google+ or Pinterest allows you to develop a community and share your story in a way that was never possible before now.

The general public still has faith in farmers, dairy farmers and ranchers, but some are still wary of modern farm practices. It is important that agriculture unites and it has a chance to tell its side of the story. Social media is one way to make your voice heard. Social media provide a quick and responsive network for people involved in dairy sector to gather and exchange information. It allows immediate dissemination of important emerging issues and the sharing of positive information among producers and consumers of dairy products.

### **Impact of Social Media**

With the ease and cost-effectiveness of social media platforms, the dairy industry must utilize the power of social media. The dairy industry has been very proactive in joining social media channels to help spread good success story of dairy farmers and good news stories with willing listeners, but for dairy producers who are not part of these social media conversations, they must now engage and involve themselves in this process.

Now a days, consumers are asking questions that they have never asked before - especially in the agricultural arena where consumers have taken a distinct interest in where their food comes from - especially with milk production. With people now two to three generations removed from the farm, current tech savvy generation is living in urban and most of them are detached from their farms, pets and dairy related business. The social media is going to be a tool to remain stay rooted with their farms or allied business using social media.

Farmers and ranchers tend to be on either side of the fence when it comes to this new form of electronic

communication. There are the hold-outs, the staunch supporters, the occasional users and the clueless. But here the tech savvy generation can help their relatives to improve their dairy business. “*Social*” media doesn’t mean it’s all about whose friends with who. A growing function of social media is to deliver information, tips and news, and cattle producers might stand to benefit even more from this trend than their urban counterparts.

The fact that social media enables twitting, blogging, tagging, discussion, networking, and so on. Since the past decade, social networking sites have become a useful tool in dairy and farm industry. We have caught a glimpse of the tremendous role social media and even mobile phones can play in establishing connections, facilitating dissemination of dairy research findings and exchange of information. It has, therefore, become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form a group, a forum and a community where ideas and information can be exchanged without any geographical obstacle. Social media makes a change in how people discover, read and share news, information, picture and content; it supports the human need for social interaction with technology.

### **Backbone**

Particularly talking about Gujarat, India, the state government has covered the entire Gujarat state with internet, through *E - Gram VishwagarmYojana*. These kiosk allow people to participate in conversations and gather intelligent thoughts and insights.

Now a day’s most of the farmers and dairy farmers are having mobile phone. Even they are well connected with internet, can get all this material in the palm of their hand. While they’re in line at the local elevator, Twitter can point you to market commentary or updates related to their business. They can get management tips, find out about events coming to your local area and listen to what consumers are saying about your ultimate end product.

In our opinion, the agricultural industry, including the dairy industry, must use the multiple social media channels available to continue to tell their story and reach out to the consumers who want to learn more! Followers on social media are like creating an army of loyal followers who work for free for you. Even Government can prepare a video for farmers with innovation in dairy sector and post on YouTube.

### **Let’s Move on**

The easiest way to get started on social media is to choose one way to contribute at first. Consider what your objectives are. Consistency is key. Once you choose the tool that works best for you, all you need to do is sign up! Do not feel like you need to be active on every network. Choose one to focus on at first and grow from there. Here are some of the important social media tools which one can utilize.

Study shows that communicating with the public about today’s modern dairy farms helps create a positive image of producers and the industry, and agricultural organizations and producers should get involved in social media to get a positive agricultural message out to the consumers. A number of dairy farms are already online with a blog or a web site, you can find links to some of them below.

- **YouTube**

YouTube is a video-sharing website, created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005 and owned by Google since late 2006, on which users can upload, view and share videos.

With over 800 million unique visitors each month, it's no wonder YouTube is the No. 2 most trafficked website.

Social media outlets, such as YouTube, are becoming more important every day in the farming industry. These outlets give producers the ability to interact with one another and engage with consumers by showcasing their stories, products and news with the click of a mouse. Trends in technology are not only bridging the gap in communication barriers, but also connecting generations, cultures, businesses and consumers.

- **Facebook**

Facebook, founded in February 2004, started as a service for college students but then opened its doors to anyone to join. Facebook is great for connecting with people; it has more than 900 million active users. You can post updates about activity on your farm, share pictures, and see what friends, celebrities, organizations and groups are up to.

- **Google+**

Google launched its own social network, Google+, in 2011 and by December 2012 had 500 million registered users.

Previously Google had operated Google Buzz, launched in February 2010, which automatically created a social network around Google's Gmail service, using the person's Gmail contact list. It was discontinued the following year, when Google+ debuted.

- **Twitter**

Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets" It is founded in March 2006.

- **LinkedIn**

It is a social network that targets professionals and promotes itself as a way to find business contacts and jobs. It launched in 2003 and as of 2008 claimed to have 30 million users.

- **Pinterest**

It is a pinboard-style photo-sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, and hobbies. Users can browse other pinboards for images, "re-pin" images to their own pinboards, or "like" photos. The site was founded by Ben Silbermann, Paul Sciarra, and Evan Sharp. It is managed by Cold Brew Labs and funded by a small group of entrepreneurs and investors.

- **Wikis**

A wiki is usually a web application, which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in a collaboration with others. Text is usually written using a simplified markup language or a rich-text editor. Using wikis one can write article related to dairy industry.

- **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging application for smartphones. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video, and audio media messages. Provides zero cost communication facility. Over 27 Billion messages are sent by over 300 million users everyday on WhatsApp! That's more than any other

social networking site by order of several magnitudes.

At a more logical level, WhatsApp seems to have democratized the social networking phenomenon in India. You'd never find a dudhwala, chaiwala, sabziwallah on Facebook or Twitter now, would you? Up until WhatsApp, social networking was for an exclusive lot, who were internet savvy, owned a laptop and had interesting things to share.

In contrast, WhatsApp needs only a feature phone; your socio-economic standing is irrelevant. The recent voice-messaging feature in WhatsApp even eliminates the need for written English as the mode of communication, making it all the more usable for an expanded set of the Indian population.

### Examples

- “Best Practices in Punjab – Dairy farming in Village Bahadurpur (Ropar)” YouTube video(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4C5w58l5H0>)

This video is published on December 10, 2012. The video provides true inspirations to new so called modern generation. In this video will be entrepreneur for the people in dairy sector. The video has been viewed by 17460 people.

- “Brothers Three Brown Swiss” (<https://www.facebook.com/bros3swiss?fref=ts> Full disclosure: This is run by Bader Rutter's own Josh Hushon and his brothers.)

The Brothers Three page on Facebook targets other producers in the registered Brown Swiss industry with updates on show winnings and genetic opportunities. The page features photos in nearly every post to highlight the breed and reinforce messages.

- Crave Brothers (<http://cravecheese.com/>)

This 1,500 cow dairy farm began merchandising cheese in 2001. Its website [www.cravecheese.com](http://www.cravecheese.com), talks about the farm, the cows, the family and the cheese. It expands these highlights via Twitter- <https://twitter.com/CraveBrosCheese> by sharing recipes with consumers.

### Gains of Social Media

- Express themselves by giving views, opinions, beliefs, guesses related to dairy business.
- Share information of dairy using audio, video, slides, photos.
- Establish relationships with researchers, entrepreneurs other dairy farmers
- Train themselves to learn about dairy business
- Know about technological developments in dairy industry

### Points to Remember of Social Media

- Keep all posts positive and build your community.
- Step out of your comfort zone.
- Set platform for dairy and your personal story.
- Be transparent and honest.

- Don't forget to listen to others on social media. You might just learn something.

## CONCLUSIONS

Social media has created many free opportunities that society, the dairy industry have never had the opportunity to use before. The audiences on social media networks are endless. By the simple click of a button or tapping on mobile phone, there is an audience of millions of people who are ready and eager to listen and learn and who want to be educated on where their food comes from.

Dairy farmers must realize that as the industry continues to change and evolve, they must be part of the movement in using social media networks as a common educational and communications tool. By using social media, dairy farmers are able to educate consumers and show them that the industry is comprised of people who 100% stand behind their product. One must remember as an industry that the consumer drives the marketplace - if they demand the product, then the industry will continue to supply them. Dairy farmers are truly the beholders of their own destiny and will determine how viable the dairy industry will be in the future. A simple message on mobile, tweet or Facebook post can single-handedly change a person's perception of a dairy farm, whether good or bad.

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